

**Remarks Given By
Lieutenant Governor Becky Skillman
at the O'Brien Main Street Conference
October 18th, 2007, Richmond, Indiana**

I'm delighted to be here in Richmond and Wayne County. It's great to be here with our partners in progress. What a perfect setting for a discussion about Main Street! Richmond has such a rich heritage, with landmarks like the National Road and the Levi Coffin House, which once served as a stop on the Underground Railroad. It's a great reminder of the incredible heritage and resources we have in Indiana.

Hoosiers have a long history of creativity and courage, intelligence and ingenuity. Richmond is a great example of that. Jazz legends used to flock here to make records thanks to the Gennett Record Company, and there are still plenty of jazz fans around.

Most importantly, what brings us to Richmond for this conference is the community's commitment to historic preservation and downtown – or in their case “uptown” – revitalization. This community and this county have some outstanding examples of 19th and early 20th century architecture. And you have done a great job of preserving those treasures, from early Victorian farmhouse to 19th century barns. Richmond is a perfect example of how historic preservation and downtown revitalization go hand-in-hand.

When historic preservationists and Main Street organizations work together, it can have a huge economic impact on the area.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT/ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Anyone who knows me, knows I have a passion for Indiana's small cities and towns. I love and appreciate our urban areas – in fact, I live in one now – but Bedford has always been my home, and small town Indiana will always be near to my heart.

I'm proud that rural counties have not been left out of the progress that's being made in our state. Far from widening the gap that has existed for so long between rural and urban Indiana, there's been a concerted effort to encourage growth in every region.

We're doing our part in state government to achieve an economic comeback, but we would be far less successful if local leaders like you weren't on board and working hard.

We don't operate under any illusions that state government can swoop in and make everything perfect. We know that government can't create prosperity. But, it can create an environment where YOU can create prosperity.

Our small cities and towns boast some of the richest resources and some of the most interesting parts of our heritage – not to mention almost half of our population. And we have never been so well equipped to develop those areas and strengthen their assets.

We cannot become a state of haves and have nots. Our state Office of Community and Rural Affairs has a lot of resources that are focused on local assets and sustainable growth. With their assistance, we're working to open doors for local economic development leaders.

You are all here today because you want to take advantage of the tools we have to offer, like the Main Street program, to make a difference in your communities. I applaud you for your efforts.

We are constantly working with communities to help them realize their own visions for growth and opportunity. In 2006 alone, just five agencies under the Lt. Governor distributed almost \$300 million in grants to communities in support of their efforts.

Every year, as we continue to create and invest in local development efforts, the result can be new jobs being created for Hoosiers who need them most.

So far this year, the state's economic development corporation has closed 115 competitive deals, bringing more 16,00 jobs and \$2.71 billion in investment to the state. And I'm proud to tell you that many of those jobs are in small towns and rural areas.

DOWNTOWNS & ECONOMIC HEALTH

One way to ensure that those opportunities come to Indiana's small cities and towns is by revitalizing their downtowns and city centers. A healthy downtown is the heart of a community and a hub of government, retail, arts,

financial and religious activity. We know that a vibrant downtown is a key factor in recruiting retail, commercial and professional industry.

All across Indiana there are examples of communities that have built upon their own unique assets to create charming, bustling downtowns that serve their residents and draw in tourists, as well.

BRAIN DRAIN

But a renewed city center can do even more for a community.

When our college students graduate and look for their first job, or their first apartment, you know as well as I do that the community matters almost as much as the career. Every community in Indiana has its own flavor, its own appeal. Every community can capitalize on its strengths to offer young Hoosiers great places to work, live and raise their families.

Indiana's challenge is to broadcast our best, to the young professionals to keep them here. The best and brightest of our students often leave the state to make money and explore. The more we do to instill a sense of community in our cities and towns, the more we'll see Hoosiers choosing to remain Hoosiers.

The Governor and I are doing all that we can to make the brain drain a thing of the past as well. There are many ways to make that happen, but we've chosen to target technology especially as we work toward our goal.

Younger generations of Hoosiers, as you well know, are technology driven. Business is increasingly technology driven. We're working to play to those interests with statewide, high speed internet access. If we have the technology available to our young, educated people, it's going to be easier for them to choose to stay put and make things happen here.

We've also been able to target Indiana's colleges and universities with the help of the General Assembly. I'm proud that we've increased their operating funds and provided a life sciences fund at IU and Purdue. The fund will help attract and retain world-class researchers – and as a result, world-class students. By the time they graduate, we expect to have plenty of options for them to get their feet wet in the working world. And with your help, we'll have even more great places for them to call “home.”

DOWNTOWN ENHANCEMENT GRANTS

Indiana Main Street has been successful, but we felt it was important to offer more value-added incentives to communities to better help them achieve their goals.

On June 13, I announced a new grant. The Downtown Enhancement Grant is designed to bring about innovative approaches to community-based planning, marketing and restoration efforts.

This program is in line with OCRA's strategic plan and the National Main Street Four Point Approach. Funded projects are eligible to receive up to \$20,000.

When we were creating this grant program, we wanted to encourage communities to use their local community foundations. We have found that these foundations are often an untapped resource – and a significant one. A recent study by the Indiana Grantmakers Alliance estimated that \$3.3 billion in local wealth could be captured through community foundations in the next ten years.

The idea of leveraging philanthropic capital is an emerging national discussion. With the continuing decline in state and federal dollars available for investment in communities, community foundations show great promise to become critical investors in Indiana and beyond.

To encourage communities to take advantage of these resources, grant applications that included a local match from their community foundation received extra points in the scoring process. We were pleased that so many communities responded enthusiastically to this request. And we understand that you started new conversations regarding engagement of local foundations as partners. I led the conversation with community foundation directors in nine southwestern counties earlier this week.

Unlike a traditional service organization that raises money for a particular cause, foundations are attached to equity that is legally tied to a community. So, it is guaranteed that money given as a contribution to a foundation will be invested and remain in the community.

CONCLUSION

I am pleased to see local Main Street organizations working together with historic preservationists, including the state Department of Historic Preservation and Archaeology and Indiana University [conference sponsors]. Thank you for all you do to help Indiana preserve its unique character. Ultimately, it's all about you. You are the people who care about the future of our communities, and the future of our state. That's the real reason Indiana will see a complete economic comeback. Thanks for all you do. Thanks for having me here today.

The recipients of this first round of Downtown Enhancement Grants are:

Brookville Main Street - \$10,000
Delphi Main Street - \$20,000
Growth Alliance for Greater Evansville - \$20,000
Heart of the Tree City in Greensburg - \$20,000
Historic Farmland USA, Inc. - \$15,600
Kokomo Downtown Association - \$20,000
Madison Main Street Program - \$20,000
Main & Market Streets - \$20,000
Main Street Rensselaer - \$6,000
Mainstreet Shelbyville, Inc. - \$20,000
Mitchell on the Move - \$6,000
Vevay Main Street - \$16,000
Wabash Marketplace, Inc. - \$20,000